UNITED
NATIONS

A

General Assembly

Distr.
GENERAL

A/S-19/6
1 April 1997

ORIGINAL: ENGLISH

Nineteenth special session
Item 8 of the provisional agenda*

REVIEW AND APPRAISAL OF THE IMPLEMENTATION OF AGENDA 21

Note by the Secretary-General

The Secretary-General has the honour to transmit herewith a statement by the Administrative Committee on Coordination for consideration by the General Assembly at its special session.

* A/S-19/1 (to be issued).

97-08051 (E) 040497

/...

ANNEX

Statement by the Administrative Committee on Coordination to the General Assembly at its special session

1. Sustainable development remains one of the most important challenges facing humanity as it approaches the twenty-first century. Yet there is growing concern that failure to accelerate economic growth and development in vast areas of the world, to resolve burning social problems, to correct unsustainable production and consumption patterns and increasing inequity, and to halt deterioration of the environment will irreversibly limit national capacities to respond to future challenges.

2. It is the collective view of the executive heads of the organizations of the United Nations system participating in the Administrative Committee on Coordination that the concept of sustainable development provides an over-arching policy framework for the entire spectrum of United Nations system-wide activities at the global, regional and country levels. Sustainable development, as set out in Agenda 21, the action plan of the United Nations Conference on Environment and Development held at Rio de Janeiro, calls for the implementation of inter-related policies promoting economic development, improved social equity and environmental sustainability. As such, it requires a more integrated approach to policy development, involving new ways of thinking, new institutional mechanisms and new partnerships with a wide variety of governmental and non-governmental stakeholders.

3. A renewed system-wide effort is called for to address the implications of globalization and liberalization in the world economy, bearing in mind the major new opportunities being opened up for trade and investment and information and technology flows, but also the risks of marginalization of the poorest countries, and the poorest groups, especially women and children, within countries.

4. International commitments to achieving sustainable development have been strengthened by the outcomes of the series of major world development conferences held during the 1990s.[1] These meetings have focused attention on the social dimension of sustainable development, in particular the overwhelming priority of poverty alleviation. Widespread poverty is a core factor in perpetuating economic stagnation, social deprivation, ill health and environmental degradation. Other conferences have increased attention to the socio-economic aspects of sustainable development.[2]

5. Successful efforts have been made to sensitize public opinion and to mobilize international cooperation, as well as to adopt specific programmes to implement Agenda 21 and to establish relevant institutional mechanisms at the international, regional, national and local levels. However, much remains to be done to restore the momentum generated at the Rio Conference and fulfil the commitments made there. Greater political leadership is needed to forge global partnership to advance Agenda 21.

6. The Administrative Committee on Coordination is resolved to meet the major challenges involved in effective implementation of commitments made at the Rio Conference. Follow-up will require a high degree of policy integration and the Committee is intent on continuing its development of effective tools and techniques to improve system-wide coordination within the United Nations system. Major change and adaptation have already been undertaken in this regard to support effective implementation at the international and national levels.

7. The Administrative Committee on Coordination attaches the greatest importance to the improvement of field-level implementation of the Rio commitments, through a coordinated approach at the country level. It particularly supports the strengthening of inter-agency cooperation at the regional level, which has great potential for practical programme delivery. Enhanced cooperation will include regional organizations outside the United Nations system.

8. The Administrative Committee on Coordination is committed to the further enhancement of cooperation among organizations of the United Nations system and a wide variety of non-governmental stakeholders, including non-governmental organizations, major groups and other components of civil society. Linkages among functional responsibilities for information resources, policy development and operational programmes will be explored in the period following the 1997 review.

9. The Administrative Committee on Coordination believes that the task manager system of the Inter-Agency Committee on Sustainable Development has led to more effective use of resources and expertise within the United Nations system and is a promising improvement over previous efforts at inter-agency cooperation. However, the system has not yet reached its full potential in terms of defining policy linkages and the sharing of responsibilities to achieve full programme synergy. The Administrative Committee on Coordination will continue to strengthen inter-agency coordination with the aim of advancing more integrated and cost-efficient policy approaches. The Inter-Agency Committee will play an important role in this regard.

10. Coordination cannot be achieved at the secretariat level alone, however. The executive heads of the organizations of the United Nations system participating in the Administrative Committee on Coordination would welcome the development of clearer and more consistent intergovernmental and national level policies for sustainable development. Clear guidance at the international and national levels would greatly facilitate the efforts of United Nations agencies to carry out their mandates effectively, and reduce the possibility of dissipation of scarce financial resources.

11. An important constraint is the financial crisis affecting the United Nations and many of the specialized agencies, which leaves little room for expanded initiatives. The expectations of additional resources raised at Rio have not been fulfilled. As a result, many organizations are having difficulty in carrying out the important activities resulting from the Conference and responding to the additional work requirements of the Commission on Sustainable Development.

12. Experience gained since the Conference has led the Administrative Committee on Coordination to the firm belief that the time has come for a new approach to policy-making which stresses practical actions to achieve sustainable development. Intergovernmental policy discussions could usefully be reoriented to focus on a limited number of strategic priority issues, the emphasis being on linkages between resource management and the role of economic actors and major groups. Such an approach would stimulate greater attention to cross-cutting issues such as population, gender, health, impact on children, production and consumption patterns, and to means of implementation, in particular financing mechanisms and technology transfer, capacity-building and education.

Notes

[1] The World Summit for Children, the World Conference on Education for All, the World Conference on Human Rights, the International Conference on Population and Development, the World Summit for Social Development, the World Conference on Natural Disaster Reduction, the Global Conference on the Sustainable Development of Small Island Developing States, the Fourth World Conference on Women and the United Nations Conference on Human Settlements.

[2] The United Nations Conference on Trade and Development (ninth session), the World Trade Organization Ministerial Meeting in Singapore and the World Food Summit.

APPENDIX

Sustainable development in the United Nations system: an explanatory note

FROM CONCEPT TO ACTION

1. The commitments made at the United Nations Conference on Environment and Development and other conferences have presented a major challenge to the entire system of United Nations programmes and institutions. Effective implementation of Agenda 21 and other Rio agreements, as well as the need for coherent multidisciplinary support to intergovernmental processes in the area of sustainable development, particularly to the Commission on Sustainable Development, have had a significant effect on virtually all organizations and programmes of the United Nations system, both jointly - in particular through the Inter-Agency Committee on Sustainable Development - and individually. The Administrative Committee on Coordination believes that the challenge has generally been met with enthusiasm and a solid commitment by the United Nations system. The specialized agencies and the programmes have proved flexible enough to make structural, programme and budget changes to enable them to provide support for the implementation of Agenda 21.

2. However, a key difficulty faced by the United Nations system is that not all governing and policy-making bodies have the same understanding of the concept of sustainable development. In some cases, sustainability is equated with environmentally sound management of natural resources, to the neglect of broader social and economic issues. Improved policy coordination across various governing bodies within the United Nations system is essential to ensuring policy coherence, more effective joint programming, more efficient deployment of resources and the avoidance of duplication resulting from overlapping tasks which might be mandated to different secretariats by their governing bodies.

3. Sustainable development demands a qualitatively different approach to coordination at both policy-making and programme implementation levels. United Nations agencies and secretariats of conventions have had to develop new institutional arrangements which can facilitate intersectoral cooperation, and new programming techniques within and between organizations. Institutional innovation is also occurring in national aid agencies. Greater cooperation between bilateral and multilateral agencies would enhance and encourage the wider adoption of these approaches.

4. In addition, Member States should promote effective coordination at the level of intergovernmental decision-making. In the language of Agenda 21, the Commission on Sustainable Development is to "rationalize the intergovernmental decision-making capacity for the integration of environment and development issues". This mandate has not been fully realized. The Commission's role is political; it does not have decision-making authority with respect to other intergovernmental processes, but it can promote common policy approaches, geared to cross-sectoral issues, to advance sustainable development if relevant responses are ensured throughout the United Nations system.

CHALLENGES AHEAD

A new approach to international policy-making

5. Experience with policy development and implementation in the years since the Rio Conference has made clear the need for new approaches which stress the operational aspects of sustainable development. Intergovernmental dialogue on sustainable development could usefully be reorganized to consider a limited number of strategic priority issues, so as to develop a more focused approach to relevant activities in the United Nations system both at the international and at the regional and country levels. The Administrative Committee on Coordination supports the proposals concerning the work programme of the Commission on Sustainable Development after 1997 contained in the report of the Secretary-General on overall progress achieved since Rio.[a] The new work programme would subject a limited number of thematic areas to in-depth consideration, highlighting the linkages with relevant chapters of Agenda 21 and the role of relevant economic sectors and major groups. This approach would promote a new emphasis on cross-cutting issues such as production and consumption patterns, population, health, impacts on gender and children and means of implementation, including finance and technology transfer, capacity-building and education, which will be essential to the development of practical and integrated policies.

Operations at the regional level

6. Since the Conference new forms of inter-agency cooperation have emerged at the regional level. They include cooperation between the regional commissions and regional representatives of the global United Nations agencies and programmes. Examples are the adoption of the Regional Action Programme for Asia and the Pacific, the establishment by the Economic and Social Commission for Western Asia, in cooperation with United Nations Environment Programme and the Food and Agriculture Organization of the United Nations, of the Joint Committee on Environment and Development in the Arab Region and the upcoming memorandum of understanding between the United Nations Children's Fund and the World Bank on collaboration in water supply, environment and sanitation in Africa. Moreover, regional organizations outside the United Nations system have taken an active role in some regions in preparing regional plans and programmes to follow up on United Nations conferences and other international programme activities, and implementation of conventions. However, achieving a better balance between work at the global level and work at the regional level will be essential for success in the next stage of Agenda 21 implementation. In those areas of sustainable development where regional approaches may prove to be most promising, possibilities for entrusting the United Nations regional commission with a more active coordination role should also be explored.

7. It is necessary to intensify regional implementation of the three Rio conventions, namely, the United Nations Framework Convention on Climate Change, the Convention on Biological Diversity and the United Nations Convention to Combat Desertification in those Countries Experiencing Serious Drought and/or Desertification, Particularly in Africa, particularly through undertaking initiatives aimed at linking activities and projects in the areas of drought and desertification, climate change, forests and biodiversity. Regional cooperation

is also vital in implementing related conventions and the commitments stemming from the series of global conferences organized by the United Nations since 1990, all of which have incorporated the fundamental principles and policy goals of Agenda 21. Regional cooperation will continue to be of great importance in implementing regional environmental agreements.

Operations at the national level

8. It is recognized that institutional cooperation at the national level should be based on country needs and requirements and an appropriate enabling context. Where national sustainable development strategies exist, and national institutional arrangements promote an integrated approach, this facilitates inter-agency cooperation and partnership. Progress in these areas, however, has been slow. Organizations with mainly analytical or normative roles and no country representation have no direct access at the country level and few means of interaction with potential partners.

9. Improved country-level coordination is needed not only among the international and regional organizations but also, in particular, among the donor programmes and activities, which are sometimes carried out in isolation from relevant inter-agency activities and national coordination mechanisms. Such coordination is needed both for the implementation of Agenda 21 initiatives, and for effective follow-up among focal points dealing with the major environmental, social and developmental conventions. Country strategy notes, which were proposed as a basis for country-level coordination, have not yet emerged as a mechanism that can ensure effective interorganizational cooperation, and the resident coordinator system has not yet realized its full potential and needs further strengthening and commitment by the system as a whole.

REVIEW OF INTER-AGENCY COORDINATION*

The Inter-Agency Committee on Sustainable Development and its task manager system

10. Almost immediately after the Rio Conference, the Administrative Committee on Coordination, taking into account provisions of Agenda 21, decided on an institutional framework for promoting a coherent system-wide response to Conference follow-up requirements. That framework was built on an innovative model that combined central coordination functions, vested in the mandates of the Administrative Committee on Coordination and the newly established Inter-Agency Committee on Sustainable Development, and decentralized allocation of specific responsibilities to relevant organizations of the United Nations system, based on their comparative strengths, to act as task managers for various programme components of Agenda 21.

---

* The Administrative Committee on Coordination undertook a review of the functioning of the Inter-Agency Committee on Sustainable Development as part of its preparations for the special session of the General Assembly. A summary of the results of the review exercise is given in this section of the statement.

11. As more experience has been gained in the implementation of Agenda 21 and in the work of the Commission on Sustainable Development, modalities for inter-agency collaboration have evolved considerably. The Inter-Agency Committee has gained in importance as an umbrella for coordination initiatives, which at the same time give full rein to numerous, more specialized inter-agency mechanisms. Experience shows that those mechanisms have worked best when taking a focused, thematic approach. That permits them to draw more deeply on each agency's expertise and resources and promotes detailed, technical collaboration related to data and information, policy and practice, or operational programmes. This has to be taken fully into account in future work, which includes improving the effectiveness of the Administrative Committee on Coordination's subcommittees on freshwater and on oceans and coastal areas; the latter subcommittee was called for by the Commission on Sustainable Development.

12. System-wide work aimed at further broadening and deepening existing inter-agency collaboration and coordination in follow-up to the Rio Conference has become an ongoing process in the United Nations system. It includes continuing consideration of measures aimed at improving the delivery capacity and coordination at the field level, enhancing policy coordination at the global, regional and country levels, better interaction between the Inter-Agency Committee and other bodies and mechanisms of the Administrative Committee on Coordination for inter-agency coordination, streamlining requests for reporting, and involvement of organizations outside the United Nations system, among others.

13. The task manager system should continue to promote greater interaction with other inter-agency arrangements, including those established to follow up other recent United Nations conferences. It has furthered outreach beyond the framework of the United Nations system, with a view to involving other relevant intergovernmental organizations and processes, as well as partners from major groups and the non-governmental organizations.

14. Task managers should continue to expand their efforts to involve major groups more widely in consultations regarding the preparation of reports for the Commission and implementation of sustainable development activities and, when appropriate, to invite experts from major groups to participate in inter-agency expert meetings.

15. In the view of the Administrative Committee on Coordination, these evolving arrangements have generally allowed the United Nations system to provide a flexible, collaborative and participatory mechanism to support the implementation of Agenda 21 and coordination of various sustainable development activities. Successful examples of system-wide collaboration, particularly at the programme/country levels, include the Interorganizational Programme on the Sound Management of Chemicals, established as an inter-agency partnership arrangement in support of the Intergovernmental Forum on Chemical Safety; the informal Inter-Agency Task Force on Forests, established to respond to the needs of the Ad Hoc Intergovernmental Panel on Forests; and cooperation in the context of the Commission's programme on indicators for sustainable development. Several cooperative inter-agency programmes which preceded the Conference, particularly in the area of science, information and analysis, have now been

linked to the Inter-Agency Committee through its task manager system, such as the World Climate Programme.

16. The Administrative Committee on Coordination believes that the task manager system of the Inter-Agency Committee has generally led to more effective use of resources and expertise within the United Nations system and is a promising improvement over previous efforts at inter-agency cooperation and joint action. It has rationalized the preparation of reports for the Commission and facilitated contributions among organizations based on their specialized mandates. By encouraging systematic communication and information exchange, it has helped disseminate knowledge of means to promote sustainable development and reduced duplication of effort.

17. Nevertheless, it is the view of the Administrative Committee on Coordination that the task manager system has not yet realized its full potential in fostering coordination among all the agencies. The review of the functioning of the Inter-Agency Committee conducted by the Administrative Committee on Coordination led to the conclusion that a better balance is needed in coordination at global, regional and country/field levels. Cooperation remains underdeveloped at the regional level - although in some instances, such as in the region of the Economic and Social Commission for Asia and the Pacific, agencies have been designated as coordinators for specific programme areas of the regional action programme.

18. Further specification of task manager roles will be necessary, to distinguish between ongoing data and information functions, for example, and cooperation at regional or national levels on programme delivery. Task managers should be encouraged to promote joint programming at the regional and subregional levels, and to foster a more integrated approach which incorporates the social and economic dimensions of sustainable development.

Resource Issues

19. Inter-agency coordination entails both benefits and costs. Its goal is to combine the expert skills and financial resources of individual agencies so that policies, information resources, and operational programmes better integrate specific sustainable development concerns. Moreover, resources may be deployed more cost-effectively when agencies collaborate in a mutually reinforcing manner, or when they accept a division of labour which avoids programme duplication. Yet consultations and networking among specialists in different fields take time, and, in spite of the fact that modern communications technology can facilitate and expedite communications, face-to-face interactions remain essential in generating responsiveness and improving results. Meetings require staff time for preparing discussion papers and reports, as well as travel expenses.

20. The task manager system therefore has its costs. System-wide reporting responsibilities have placed a considerable strain on individual organizations, as they have been borne within existing human and financial resources. It has been difficult financially to keep up representation in the Commission, the Inter-Agency Committee and Agenda 21-related meetings and with those relevant to the agency's mandate. Further operationalization of new political agreements

reached at the intergovernmental level and moving towards joint programming would give rise to additional demands.

21. The financial crisis affecting the United Nations and many of the specialized agencies and programmes leaves little room for innovative and more cooperative initiatives by individual agencies or throughout the system. The expectations raised by the Rio Conference of an increase in available resources have not been met, while the activities that had to be carried out have expanded considerably. The organizations and agencies of the United Nations system are therefore hard-pressed to carry out both their original mandates and those stemming from the Conference and the work requirements of the Commission. At the same time, as changes in programmes and procedures yield appreciable improvements, they offer new opportunities and invite further commitments and requests on the part of Member States.

22. Joint programming, directly involving a limited number of the most concerned agencies, needs to be further fostered. Policy integration and the need for coordinated action are the central messages of Agenda 21. However, it is becoming urgently apparent that efforts to promote integrated approaches to coordination at policy-making and programme implementation levels are not matched by coordinated funding mechanisms. United Nations agencies involved in joint programmes are generally required to seek funding from their own funding bodies, with adverse effects on resource efficiency. In this context, efforts should be increased to enhance the effectiveness of cooperation between various agencies of the United Nations system with international financial institutions, including those outside the United Nations system such as regional development banks. There is, moreover, a need for further development of joint funding arrangements, so that joint funding proposals can be presented for more effective consideration by appropriate funding institutions and mechanisms.

Notes

[a] E/CN.17/1997/2.

UNITED NATIONS

A E

General Assembly
Economic and Social Council

Distr.
GENERAL

A/S-19/7
E/1997/19
4 April 1997

ORIGINAL: ENGLISH

GENERAL ASSEMBLY
Nineteenth special session
23-27 June 1997
Item 8 of the provisional agenda*
OVERALL REVIEW AND APPRAISAL OF THE IMPLEMENTATION OF AGENDA 21

ECONOMIC AND SOCIAL COUNCIL
Substantive session of 1997
Geneva, 30 June-25 July 1997
Items 7 (a) and (b) of the provisional agenda**
REPORTS, CONCLUSIONS AND RECOMMENDATIONS OF SUBSIDIARY BODIES: ECONOMIC QUESTIONS, ENVIRONMENTAL QUESTIONS

Letter dated 21 March 1997 from the Permanent Representatives of Japan and the United States of America to the United Nations addressed to the Secretary-General

We would be most grateful for your agreement to circulate, as an official document of the fifth session of the Commission on Sustainable Development, to be held in New York from 7 to 25 April 1997, and of the special session of the General Assembly for the purpose of an overall review and appraisal of the implementation of Agenda 21, to be held in New York from 23 to 27 June 1997, the executive summary (see annex) of the Interregional Seminar on Global Mapping for the Implementation of Multinational Environmental Agreements, held from 13 to 16 November 1996 at Santa Barbara, California. The seminar was jointly organized by the Department for Development Support and Management Services of the United Nations Secretariat, the Geographical Survey Institute, the Ministry of Construction of the Government of Japan, and the University of California at Santa Barbara.

(Signed) Hisashi OWADA
Permanent Representative
of Japan to the United Nations

(Signed) Bill RICHARDSON
Permanent Representative
of the United States of America
to the United Nations

* A/S-19/1, to be issued.

** E/1997/100, to be issued.

97-08970 (E) 080497

/...

Annex

INTERREGIONAL SEMINAR ON GLOBAL MAPPING FOR THE IMPLEMENTATION OF MULTINATIONAL ENVIRONMENTAL AGREEMENTS

(Santa Barbara, California, 13-16 November 1996)

EXECUTIVE SUMMARY

The Seminar focused on improving understanding of the role that spatial data products play in the development and implementation of multinational environmental agreements. Specifically, the Seminar documented: the need for spatial data products in support of the implementation of multinational environmental agreements; the current status of global 1:1 million or 1:1 kilometre scale mapping activities; and the requirements for international coordination of and cooperation in geospatial data development activities. The Seminar was jointly sponsored by the Department for Development Support and Management Services of the United Nations Secretariat; the University of California at Santa Barbara; and the Geographical Survey Institute, Ministry of Construction of the Government of Japan. The Seminar was attended by 80 participants from a wide variety of backgrounds, including academia, government, commercial companies and international organizations, representing 23 countries spanning the globe, ranging from small island nations to continental-sized nations. Topics covered at the Seminar included discussion and documentation of global mapping projects; thematic data layers required for a global map (e.g., topography, hydrology, transportation); limitations of such maps; harmonization of standards among national mapping organizations; archiving and access to data; the need for capacity-building in developing nations; and the overall need for better map products. Also discussed were the roles of international organizations in such areas as financing of spatial data development, facilitating technical cooperation and collaboration among national mapping organizations and similar organizations.

Background information developed for the Seminar noted, in the context of a changing global environment, that:

(a) In many developing countries, even well understood environmental changes with local causes and effects that, in the aggregate, may represent a global concern are often very low priorities for officials compared to such issues as food, health care and the safety of their people;

(b) Even in highly developed countries where scientific understanding is widespread, it is often difficult to generate political and financial support for the correction of widely recognized environmental problems;

(c) Although the primary concerns of Governments may be related to needs for national development, many relevant issues are global in nature;

(d) Large-scale, science-based datasets do not exist for most of the Earth at the present time, even in highly developed countries;

(e) Development of those datasets is labour intensive, in terms of both scientific and technical personnel, and is, therefore, expensive;

(f) Although such datasets could support a wide variety of useful applications specific to a given locale, no single use can generally justify the cost of their development;

(g) In a number of countries, the high resolution science-based datasets needed by the world community are classified and are not permitted to leave the country in any form;

(h) In some instances, where such data are exchanged with "friendly" nations, restrictive agreements can still limit access to those data;

(i) There is a need to improve the archiving of and access to global geospatial data;

(j) There is a need for improved coordination among global mapping efforts.

The Seminar was an outgrowth of the activities of the International Steering Committee for Global Mapping (ISCGM). ISCGM participants come from national mapping organizations, international organizations, academic institutions and non-governmental organizations. ISCGM is working to facilitate the development of 1:1,000,000 scale global map data. Also working towards this goal are a number of other organizations and institutions around the globe (e.g., Earth Map, the United Nations Environment Programme/Global Resources Information Database, the National Geographic Society, the International Geosphere Biosphere Programme, and the United States Geological Survey and National Image and Mapping Agency). Although participants recognized the realities of national security, national sovereignty and other issues (e.g., cost recovery and copyright) that limit the general availability of high resolution spatial data, they felt that the time has come to increase coordination in mapping efforts, wherever feasible. In discussions, some participants from small nations felt that the scale of 1:1,000,000 is too coarse for their countries' needs. Those participants were very interested in the potential for the generation of higher resolution datasets for their regions.

In presentations, participants heard that the variety and amounts of Earth observation data of many types are rapidly increasing as new generations of surface, airborne and satellite-based sensor and communication systems become operational. Realization of the existence and potential of those data are providing impetus to efforts to coordinate the development of global scale mapping efforts. That realization has spurred efforts to calibrate, validate and harmonize aspects of the collection, formatting, access to and distribution of those data. Participants were also told that those Earth observation data could in essence, form the foundation and provide the building blocks for a global spatial data infrastructure.

Such an infrastructure would include base cartographic and thematic data (e.g., physical, environmental, socio-economic, infrastructure and other relevant spatial data). Over time, it would foster the harmonization of data so

that information from one region could be integrated with information from other regions, and could be effectively employed as a tool to improve sustainable development decision-making. Making a global spatial data infrastructure a reality would also involve addressing issues of varied data policies and forging appropriate partnerships. Global mapping was recognized as an important component of the concept. "Global mapping" was understood here as a process for the creation, maintenance, access, future development and application of spatial data at appropriate scales and resolutions.

Participants were also told of the need to coordinate archiving and to support international efforts to facilitate access to those data. Capacity-building is also needed as developing nations seek to improve their capabilities to develop their own basic spatial data framework. The information that can be derived from those types of spatial data could contribute significantly to knowledge of both natural resources characteristics and social/economic dimensions of countries. Such data could also assist in the formulation, monitoring, development and management of policies for the implementation of multinational environmental agreements.

Participants strongly supported the concept of a global spatial data infrastructure. Although a global spatial data infrastructure is a key supporting tool to the implementation of several sectoral and cross sectoral chapters of Agenda 21, it is particularly relevant to the implementation of chapter 40, "Information for decision-making". That chapter is concerned with two main issues, namely "Bridging the data gap" and "Improving availability of information". Participants also believed that international bodies, such as the United Nations and the World Bank, need to do more to coordinate and to facilitate the development of a global spatial data infrastructure (i.e. including provision of the financing for dataset development and capacity-building). They believed that such an infrastructure cannot be developed without the active participation and direct involvement of national mapping organizations around the globe.

As their principal output, participants developed the Santa Barbara Statement, and agreed to work towards the goal of an integrated global spatial data infrastructure. The Santa Barbara Statement, the text of which is reproduced below, presents the conclusions, recommendations and actions agreed to by participants at the Seminar.

Santa Barbara Statement

Approaching the dawn of the twenty-first century, the international community is entering a challenging new era of development. Globalization, openness and interdependence are now recognized as key features of the world economy. Objectives under Agenda 21, particularly those related to chapter 40, "Information for decision-making", can only be effectively implemented with improved worldwide availability of and access to relevant spatial data, such as those displayed on maps. Recognizing that current global mapping efforts are primarily driven by global change concerns, future progress must also be responsive to more immediate national priorities that enhance economic growth and ensure sustainable development.

The Interregional Seminar on Global Mapping for the Implementation of Multinational Environmental Agreements (Santa Barbara, California, 13-16 November 1996) builds upon recommendations made at the First International Workshop on Global Mapping held at Izumo, Japan, in 1994. Participants at Santa Barbara agreed that actions are needed to facilitate expanded, cooperative efforts on global mapping. Actions needed include:

(a) Finding ways to increase scientific and technological development of mapping organizations in both the developed and developing countries in order to produce better map and information products;

(b) Increasing technical assistance for country capacity-building so that Governments can use spatial data products more effectively and efficiently;

(c) Strengthening of mechanisms that improve the provision of technical and economic assistance to developing countries in order to support the collection, production, archiving and dissemination of map data, which can then be integrated into global spatial data products;

(d) Designating the International Steering Committee for Global Mapping (ISCGM), which includes representatives of national mapping organizations and the international community, to coordinate the development of a global spatial data infrastructure.

Mapping of core information required to make decisions consistent with sustainable development needs to be addressed on a global scale. A diverse group, which includes national mapping organizations, space agencies, international scientific organizations, national research institutes, private-sector agencies and data sources, academia, non-governmental organizations, donors, development banks and the United Nations, all have a stake in global mapping. Global mapping is critical to the concept of a global spatial data infrastructure. "Global mapping" is understood here as a process for the creation, maintenance, access, future development and application of spatial data at appropriate scales and resolutions. A global spatial data infrastructure would include base cartographic and thematic data (e.g. physical, environmental, socio-economic, infrastructure and other relevant spatial data). Over time, the infrastructure would foster the harmonization of data so that information from one region could be integrated with information from other regions and effectively employed as a tool to improve sustainable development decision-making. Making a global spatial data infrastructure a reality will also involve addressing issues of varied data policies and forging appropriate partnerships.

Participants at Santa Barbara strongly believe that this Seminar provided an important opportunity to advance the concept of a global spatial data infrastructure. They recognize that the need for map and information products relevant to sustainable development is global:

(a) The primary concern of developing countries and economies in transition is related to pressing national development issues that could be better achieved with the availability of a global spatial data infrastructure;

(b) Incentives must be provided to foster cooperation within and among countries in efforts to produce, maintain and disseminate accurate maps and information products;

(c) A variety of technical and institutional challenges must be overcome if progress is to be realized.

Participants recognize the reasons why adequate global scale maps do not exist at present. Issues of national security, sovereignty, technology, capacity and infrastructure limit opportunities for international cooperation. Those restrictions currently combine to limit global map development activities to scales of 1:1,000,000. To maximize the benefit of global map products, spatial data-sharing needs to be encouraged on that scale and better, wherever possible. Such efforts must support spatial data requirements at varying scales and resolutions in order to meet specific local and national priorities. Current access policies (e.g., distribution and sharing restrictions) must be addressed so that they do not become constraints to the creation of globally consistent datasets.

The seminar confirmed that there are a number of ongoing efforts contributing to the production of a global map framework. Participants encourage national mapping organizations, including those from countries facing technical and financial constraints, to continue efforts that contribute to the objective of creating better more accessible maps at scales from local to global levels. Participants recognize the special role of ISCGM as a catalyst in this endeavour, and expect ISCGM to play a leading role in implementing, where appropriate, recommendations made by participants at the Santa Barbara Seminar.

Participants at the Seminar appreciate the effort made by its organizers, and recognize the input of the Seminar to furthering the implementation of global mapping within a global spatial data infrastructure. Participants recommend the following:

1. A global mapping forum must be created, bringing together data users and providers to facilitate the creation of a global spatial data infrastructure. A variety of national, regional and international organizations, non-governmental organizations, private-sector companies, academia, national mapping organizations, and space agencies, as well as other relevant organizations, must be involved in this effort. ISCGM should undertake a study to create such a forum and determine the responsibilities necessary, such as periodic assessments of progress, harmonization of standards, and mechanisms for the establishment of a global mapping network. Such a network would be connected to the Internet and/or other means to facilitate communications.

2. Agencies implementing Agenda 21 accords should precisely define their spatial data and information requirements for implementation, compliance and monitoring, with the assistance of expert groups (e.g., ISCGM). Those requirements should be included as priorities of a global spatial data infrastructure.

3. Financial and other incentives for project partnerships within a global spatial data infrastructure should be devised to facilitate the participation of national institutions of developing countries and economies in transition.

4. Donor agencies and development banks should increase assistance to institutions in developing countries and economies in transition to improve the quality of spatial data products and services, and should facilitate access to those data for the creation of regional and global map products.

5. Issues related to spatial data policy and access must be discussed by the United Nations regional cartographic conferences.

6. Overall global map development should be fostered under the umbrella of the United Nations, and should recognize initiatives being taken at the national, regional and global levels.

7. The United Nations Environment Programme Global Resource Information Database and other United Nations programmes directly involved in global spatial data infrastructure activities should be strengthened to provide necessary technical support systems and metadata services to United Nations agencies and member countries.

8. Complementary efforts for the provision of technical support by a variety of national, regional and international organizations should be encouraged and coordinated in strengthening global spatial data infrastructure activities.

9. The above-mentioned recommendations should be contained in a report to be presented to the special session of the United Nations General Assembly for the purpose of an overall review and appraisal of the implementation of Agenda 21, in 1997. That report will make a clear and practical proposal for implementation, developed under the auspices of the Department for Development Support and Management Services of the United Nations Secretariat, with the assistance of ISCGM.

UNITED
NATIONS

A E

General Assembly
Economic and Social Council

Distr.
GENERAL

A/S-19/8
E/1997/20
4 April 1997

ORIGINAL: ENGLISH

GENERAL ASSEMBLY
Nineteenth special session
23-27 June 1997
Item 8 of the provisional agenda*
OVERALL REVIEW AND APPRAISAL OF
THE IMPLEMENTATION OF AGENDA 21

ECONOMIC AND SOCIAL COUNCIL
Substantive session of 1997
Geneva, 30 June-25 July 1997
Items 7 (a) and (b) of the
provisional agenda**
REPORTS, CONCLUSIONS AND
RECOMMENDATIONS OF SUBSIDIARY
BODIES: ECONOMIC QUESTIONS,
ENVIRONMENTAL QUESTIONS

Letter dated 31 March 1997 from the Permanent Representative of the Republic of Korea to the United Nations addressed to the Secretary-General

I have the honour to transmit to you a resolution of the National Assembly of the Republic of Korea calling for the cancellation of a plan by a power company of Taiwan Province of China to ship 200,000 barrels of radioactive waste to the Democratic People's Republic of Korea.

Chapter 22 of Agenda 21 specifically deals with the issue of radioactive waste. At its second session, in May 1994, the Commission on Sustainable Development called upon the international community to take all necessary steps to prohibit the export of radioactive waste, except to countries with appropriate waste treatment and storage facilities. Furthermore, radioactive wastes are cited as one of the major threats to the environment in a document of the fifth session of the Commission (E/CN.17/1997/4).

The fact that a power company of Taiwan Province of China could attempt to export radioactive waste to a country where appropriate facilities are lacking, without being subject to any existing international regulatory mechanism, clearly testifies to the need to strengthen the current international regime controlling the transboundary movement of radioactive waste. The newly emerging threat and danger to the environment arising from irresponsible and

* A/S-19/1, to be issued.

** E/1997/100, to be issued.

inappropriate transboundary movements of radioactive waste deserves the serious attention of the Commission on Sustainable Development and of the General Assembly at its special session.

I would greatly appreciate it if you would arrange for the present letter and the annexed resolution to be circulated as an official document of the fifth session of the Commission on Sustainable Development, under item 4 of the provisional agenda, and of the special session of the General Assembly for the purpose of an overall review and appraisal of the implementation of Agenda 21.

(Signed) PARK Soo Gil
Permanent Representative

Annex*

RESOLUTION CALLING FOR THE WITHDRAWAL OF THE PLAN TO SHIP TAIWAN'S NUCLEAR WASTE TO NORTH KOREA

The National Assembly of the Republic of Korea,

Stressing that good-neighbourliness is the supreme value in relations between neighbouring countries, and that the environment should be protected and preserved not just for our generation but also for our descendants,

Deeply concerned that nuclear waste, even of low or mid-level radioactivity can seriously affect the environment for human beings, and that damages caused by radiation may last longer than a century,

Bearing in mind the generally accepted principle of international law that nuclear waste should be stored or disposed of in the country where they are generated,

Noting that Taiwan's attempt to ship its nuclear waste to North Korea, seeking its own benefit at the expense of another country's environment, is ethically unacceptable,

Recalling that the European Union declared it wrong for economically and technically advanced nations to export nuclear waste to developing countries by adopting in 1989 the Lome Convention which banned the EU member States' shipment of nuclear waste to African, Caribbean and Pacific region,

Expressing our firm belief that it is unacceptable for North Korea to import nuclear waste against the interest of our nation and at the risk of contaminating our people's living environment,

Deeply concerned that such an unscrupulous step taken by North Korea can jeopardize the ongoing inter-Korean cooperative projects,

Sincerely hoping that Taiwan will contribute to the promotion of friendly and cooperative relations in this region by withdrawing its plan to ship nuclear waste to North Korea,

1. Strongly urges the Taiwanese authorities to immediately stop the plan of exporting their nuclear waste to North Korea;

---

* The present annex has been reproduced as received. The designations employed and the presentation of the material in this annex do not imply the expression of any opinion whatsoever on the part of the Secretariat of the United Nations concerning the legal status of any country, territory, city or area or of its authorities, or concerning the delimitation of its frontiers or boundaries.

2. Sternly demands in the name of the Korean people that the North Korean authorities not import nuclear waste from Taiwan or any other source in order to preserve the health and safety not just of our own generation but of our future generations as well.